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A HISTORY OF BILTMORE BAPTIST CHURCH

1889 - 1989

By Connie Mixson

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A NOTE OF APPRECIATION

I wish to thank the members of Biltmore Baptist Church for being especially supportive of the Centennial Committee in our efforts to make this a memorable centennial year. I also wish to thank the members of the Centennial Committee who have worked so diligently on the various projects associated with the celebration and assisted in gathering information for this history. Members of the Centennial Committee are as follows:

Dick Woody (Chairman), Kitty Russell (Secretary), Faye Alexander, Bill Batson, Ed Crawford, Sandra Crawford, Hazel Edwards, Mary Holcombe, Jeanette Jones, Roger Lance, Nellie McCarthy, Connie Mixson, Bob Smith, and Janice Whitehead.

Other church members have been of great assistance in helping the Centennial Committee with special projects such as the church directory and the play. Some of these willing helpers for the directory were Claudette Batson, Lawana Egan, Rena Lance, and Virginia Wick. All the "nitty-gritty", time-consuming, behind the scenes work on the play was in the capable hands of Faye Alexander, Director, and Faye Muse, Assistant Director, who also was in charge of the slides and program design. They were assisted by Roger and Susan Ward (music), Roberta Cordell (costumes), and John Condrey and Chester and Margaret Owenby (props). A big "thank you" to these folks for their willingness to serve on a tough assignment without flinching, and to the actors and actresses for giving of their time and talents over many weeks of preparation. I especially want to express my appreciation to Dick and Allene Woody and Janice and George Whitehead for their untiring efforts in seeking out "all the facts" through court records in Asheville and Associational records at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C.

Connie Mixson, Historian
August, 1989

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PASTORS OF BILTMORE BAPTIST CHURCH

<u>Pastor</u>	<u>Date Came</u>	<u>Date Left</u>
Daniel B. Nelson	March 7, 1889	June, 1892
Millard A. Jenkins	1892	1893
Gilbert L. Finch	1894	1894 (?)
Albert E. Brown	1895	1895 (?)
V. H. Gibson	1896	1896 (?)
V. W. Jones	1897	1898
V. P. Southern	1899	1899
James M. Hamrick	1900	1901
V. F. Staley	1902	1904
V. J. Cleveland	1905	1905
A. E. Allison	Nov., 1906	Aug. 1, 1908
F. A. Clarke	May, 1909	Jan. 7, 1910
William W. Marr	April, 1910	(?)
V. H. Moore	May, 1913	1914
Edward Jenkins	1914	1915
S. M. White	June, 1915	1915
C. M. Rock	Jan., 1916	June, 1917
C. K. Turner	Jan. 30, 1918	Oct. 12, 1919
Samuel T. Hensley	Feb., 1920	June 1, 1923
William H. Fitzgerald	June 4, 1923	Oct. 6, 1929
W. H. Fitzgerald (recalled)	Dec. 22, 1929	August, 1934
B. F. Gehring	Feb. 20, 1935	March, 1937
V. P. Hall	August, 1937	Sept., 1940
C. C. Prince	Dec., 1940	Aug. 5, 1942
C. F. Rogers	Oct. 7, 1942	Jan. 4, 1950
H. B. Fisher	Apr. 19, 1950	May 8, 1957
John Grant	Jan., 1958	Nov., 1968
Harold Savell	June, 1969	Present



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PASTORS OF BILTMORE BAPTIST CHURCH
AND TIME PERIOD SERVED



Daniel B. Nelson
March, 1889 - June, 1892



Albert E. Brown
1895



W. F. Staley
1902 - 1904



W. H. Moore
May, 1913 - 1914

PASTORS OF BILTMORE BAPTIST CHURCH
AND TIME PERIOD SERVED



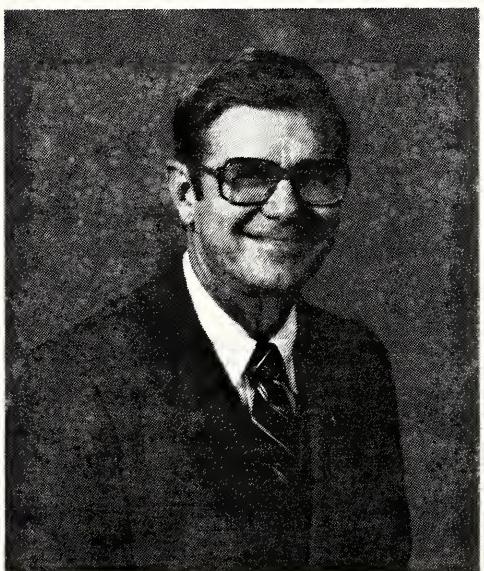
Dr. William H. Fitzgerald
June, 1923 - August, 1934



Rev. and Mrs. H. B. Fisher
April, 1950 - May, 1957



Pastor John Grant
January, 1958 - November, 1968



Pastor Harold Savell
June, 1969 - Present

CHAPTER 1
BACKGROUND HISTORY OF THE AREA
ASHEVILLE JUNCTION - BEST - BILTMORE

The history of a church is more than the story of a building on a plot of ground. It is the story of a people and the community they call home. It is also the story of individuals who, because of their words or actions, whether members of the church or not, have made a lasting effect on those people in that church in that community. That is why I feel it is important to know something of the Biltmore area and the people who lived there during the early beginnings of our church. Their story is our story, and it is briefly outlined on the following pages.

In the mid-1880's Asheville was a small but thriving mountain town of some 800 inhabitants. It was, in fact, the only incorporated village west of the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Located in Buncombe county (named for the Revolutionary war hero, Col. Edward Buncombe), it even boasted a county court house. The court house had been built in 1793 near the intersection of Patton Avenue and Pack Square. At that time the town had been named Morristown, but in 1797 was renamed Asheville for Gov. Samuel Ashe, who was then in office.

It was actually in the Biltmore area that Buncombe county was first organized in 1791 at the home of Col. William Davidson. His home was at Gum Spring, near the present entrance to the Biltmore Estate. In fact, the courthouse almost surely would have been built a few miles south of his home, were it not for the drinking preferences of the early county commissioners. The 1883-84 Asheville City Directory explains what

happened. It seems that the commissioners appointed to select the land for the county seat had already determined on the Biltmore site as the best location, but were treated so well by a tavern owner near the square of present-day Asheville that "mellowed by the soothing influence of the liquer, they unanimously changed their minds, and bowing to the wishes of the tavern keeper, decided the best place for a town to be was where whiskey was plenty!" So the Biltmore area was left to be a suburb and the county seat was established two miles to the north.

In 1855 the charter for a Western North Carolina railroad was issued, but the Civil War intervened. Finally a rail line was completed to Marion in 1870 and Old Fort in 1873. After fundraising difficulties in a drive to sell bonds to finance the project further, the Western North Carolina Railroad was taken over by the state and construction was resumed in 1877. It was mainly convict labor that brought the railroad to Asheville in 1880. In that year, W. J. Best and Associates bought the railroad from the state. At that time it had not yet reached the present site of Biltmore, though soon tracks were laid to the area. Upon their completion a brick depot was built and the area was called Asheville Junction, and a post office for the community was named "Best" in honor of the owner of the railroad. Another entry in the 1883-84 Asheville City Directory gives an interesting description of the Best community as follows:

"Two miles south of Asheville courthouse, it is the shipping point for a considerable region to the south, southeast, and southwest. Extensive improvements in the shape of new buildings and the filling up of Blowgum Gulch, long a dangerous pitfall for the inebriated pilgrim, have lately been originated."

Houses were few and scattered in the community, and there were no schools or churches. However, by 1888 Asheville was thriving. That year

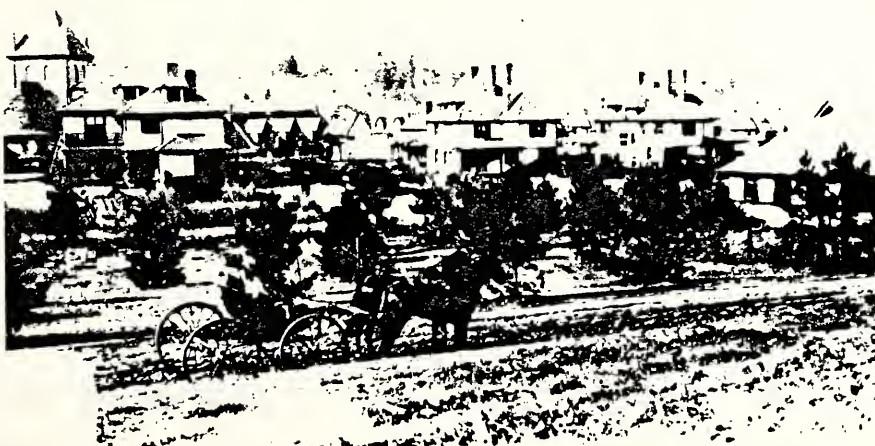
the streetcar system was built, the first public schools were opened, and electric street lights appeared as well as the first telephones and sewer system.

In 1880 Judge Edward Aston, a mayor of Asheville, had begun promoting the city as a health resort for those with TB and lung diseases. This promotion drew physicians who remained to open hospitals and sanitariums which attracted prominent people suffering from health problems. These people remained to invest money and open businesses in the city. It was the coming of the railroad, however, that brought tourists to Asheville, many of whom were to make a lasting mark on the area. One of these tourists was George Washington Vanderbilt, a grandson of Cornelius Vanderbilt, a wealthy New York shipping magnate. He first began coming to Asheville in 1887. Still under 30, Vanderbilt was not only wealthy, but a scholar who spoke eight languages fluently and had traveled extensively. It was Asheville, however, with its natural beauty and healthful climate, that he selected for his home, and he began quietly buying up land until he owned over 125,000 acres including Mt. Pisgah.

For his future home Vanderbilt envisioned a great estate built in the manner of the French Chateaux. He planned for the estate to be entirely self-sufficient, and to make this possible he would employ the best workers and materials in horticulture, landscaping, architecture, animal breeding, dairy farming and forestry. He even coined a name for his project - "Biltmore", a combination of two words, the "Bilt" coming from the name of the town in Holland from which his family came (Van der Bildt), and "more" from the English "moor", describing a rolling, upland country. He began the construction of his estate in 1889, and it took 1000 workers over five years to build it. It opened officially on Christmas eve, 1895.

Desiring a suitable place to house the many artisans and workers for the estate, in 1889 Vanderbilt purchased the town of Best in its entirety. The town was to be completely leveled and a model English countryside village was constructed in its place. Records indicate that on March 4, 1890 the town's name was changed to Bilton, and just a little over two weeks later, on March 20, it was changed again to Biltmore Village. The focal point of the village was the picturesque All Soul's Church, and in addition to the workers' residences there were stores, a post office, hospital, school, recreation hall, and the railroad station.

Vanderbilt's only child, Cornelia, married John Francis Amherst Cecil, an Englishman who could trace his lineage back to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, secretary to Queen Elizabeth I. Lord Burghley's son, Robert Cecil, was responsible for arranging the crowning of James I who united England and Scotland. When Cornelia married the couple made the Biltmore Estate their home. Their two sons, George and William, are the present owners.



This photograph of Biltmore Village was taken in 1903, looking north. The Old Kenilworth Inn may be seen on the hill slightly to the right. Courtesy Pack Memorial Library

CHAPTER 2

A CHURCH IS ORGANIZED

During the period of time when Asheville Junction was developing into "Best" and later, "Biltmore", the first stirrings of a new church were also developing. The church which was to become the First Baptist Church of Asheville had been organized as early as 1829. However, it was the coming of the railroad in the decade from 1880 to 1890 and the subsequent explosion in the city population from 2,600 to 10,200 inhabitants that prompted a mission effort on the part of that church. Their church history indicates that in 1887 a city missionary was employed and mission Sunday schools were established in Biltmore and West end - "both later becoming churches."

Perhaps it was this mission Sunday school that planted the seed in the hearts of James and Lula Brookshire that would come to fruition in the establishment of a church. Whatever the motivating force, court records record that on February 23, 1888 J. M. Brookshire and wife, Lula M. Brookshire, being desirous of having a Baptist church erected at Asheville Junction, N.C. to be known as the Fern Hill Baptist Church, for the sum of \$1.00 placed in trust with the trustees of First Baptist Church of Asheville a certain parcel of land for that purpose. This land was described as being located on the south side of the Swannanoa River and near the Asheville Junction depot of the Western North Carolina Railroad. It consisted of 1/4 acre "on the western side of the Buncombe Turnpike road leading from Asheville to Hendersonville," and was to be held in special trust by the trustees of First Baptist Church and conveyed to the trustees of Fern Hill Baptist Church at Asheville Junction upon the organization of said church.

Later, in the court records of April 17, 1890, we find the First Baptist Church trustees conveying the property to the trustees of the now organized Fern Hill Baptist Church. In this document Asheville Junction is already referred to as Biltmore. A church building has obviously been erected in the meantime, for the words "being the lot whereon the Fern Hill Baptist Church now stands" appear in the description of the property.

What this first structure looked like is not indicated, but in a history of Biltmore Baptist Church given to Margaret Cole by long-time member, Mrs. S. J. (Granny) Warren, she describes a small, one-room church with a bell on top. It is quite probable that the church met in a very simple structure when first organized. However, its location was in close proximity to Mr. Vanderbilt's model English village, and one can assume that the architectural style was not exactly suitable for its new surroundings.

At any rate, George Vanderbilt's connections with the church became evident as early as 1893. Susan Ward, Curator of the Biltmore Estate, furnished the History Committee with copies of files of the estate from that year that pertain specifically to the church. Among these is a Report On Plans. Proposed Baptist Church. Biltmore presented to the building committee of the church. This report describes a church to accommodate 350 persons, with a schoolroom and 2 vestries. It is proposed to use the present seats as far as practicable, and make new ones to suit the plans. The foundation walls are to be of brick, laid in cement, and the superstructure to be framed out of well-seasoned mountain pine.

This proposal is followed by several work reports. One such report dated June 16, 1893 signed by R.S. Smith under the letterhead of Richard M. Hunt, Architect, as they all are, is an acceptance of an estimate from the

N.C. woodworking company of \$525 for the mill work of the Baptist Church, Biltmore. Mr. Smith indicates in this acceptance that this was to be delivered within one month from date. Further acceptances of shingles (June 23, 1893), and metal lathing and rough casting (Sept. 5, 1893) indicate work is progressing toward the erection of a new church structure. Mr. Vanderbilt is directly mentioned in a letter by Mr. Smith of Sept. 7, 1893 referring to the church as follows:

"The other matters of detail drawings will have my immediate attention as soon as I receive instructions from our New York office, for which I wrote previous to your trip to N.Y. You will probably remember I asked you to bring the office matter before Mr. Forachon, as I was unable to get any satisfaction. Probably they are waiting Mr. Vanderbilt's instructions."

Again under the letterhead of the same architect, R.S. Smith writes to a Charles McNamee on Sept. 15, 1893 the following:

"Dear Sir:

Pardon me for troubling you while you should be enjoying seclusion from the worry of business. I had intended asking you before leaving for a check for my services for plans, &c. for Baptist Church, Biltmore. I had supposed that it was Mr. Vanderbilt's intention to pay me for the extra work of outside affairs. Your assistance will be appreciated.

Yours respectfully,"

(A November receipt indicates that Mr. Smith was paid \$150 for preparing plans for the Baptist Church, Biltmore).

What can be ascertained by the above information?

First, there was a "Fern Hill Baptist Church" standing on the property as early as April 13, 1890 when the First Baptist trustees conveyed the property over to the Fern Hill Baptist trustees.

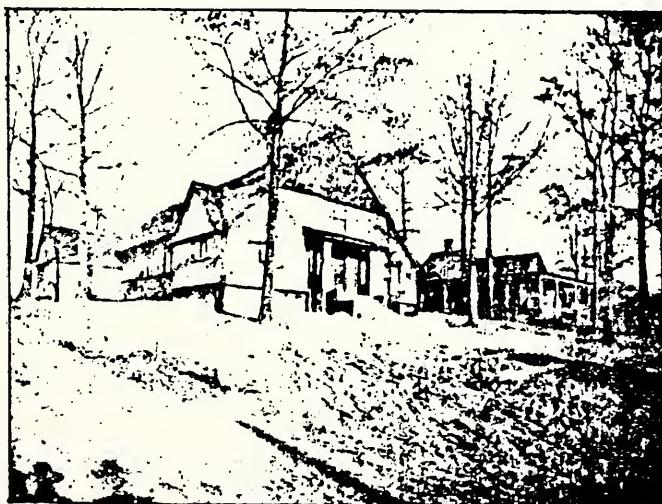
Secondly, some sort of building plans were carried out for a new building for the church under the direction of George Vanderbilt in 1893. At least in one of the documents associated with these plans a request is made to deliver the material within one month from the date June 16, 1893.

Since later still shingles are accepted, it would be a fair assumption that a new structure was built for the church by Vanderbilt in 1893 - probably in a style that blended with the model village of Biltmore he built for his workers because of the close proximity of the church property to the village. However, the most conclusive evidence of this is from a notation made in the diary of our first pastor, Daniel B. Nelson, as follows:

"I preached to Fern Hill Church (Biltmore) until June, 1892 when I resigned. November 19, 1893, I preached the dedicatory sermon in the new house of worship built by Mr. George W. Vanderbilt."

There is no question that several years later, in 1913, Mr. Vanderbilt offered to build the church a new building on Summit Street in exchange for the property on which it then stood. This offer was accepted, and a pebble-dash building was erected. At the same time a parsonage was built beside the church. Today, over 75 years later, both buildings still stand. The church he built for Fern Hill Baptist is the current home of Asheville Full Gospel Tabernacle.

In 1914, just a year after this church was completed, George Vanderbilt died suddenly following an appendectomy. He was 52 years old.



BILTMORE BAPTIST CHURCH

Biltmore, N. C.

CHAPTER 3

OUR FIRST PASTOR - DANIEL BURYMAN NELSON

In those early years when God was preparing a place of worship for the body of believers in this little community called Biltmore, He was no less preparing a shepherd for the new flock.

Born August 7, 1832, in Knoxville, Tennessee, Daniel Buryman Nelson learned early the lessons of shepherding a family he would need later in life. His father died when he was 15, leaving Daniel, as the oldest son in the family, the responsibility of caring for his invalid mother and several younger brothers and sisters.

Following the death of his father he moved the family to Strawberry Plains, Tennessee. At nearby Mossy Creek College in Jefferson City (now Carson Newman College), he received a degree in law, having intended to make this profession his life's work. Soon, however, he felt the call to preach, and during the years of study for the ministry he discovered that teaching school and operating a store were more lucrative than practicing law. It was essential that he work long hours to make ends meet, for in June of 1855 he had married a neighbor, Sarah Ann Vance, and 13 children were to be born of this marriage.

The Civil War brought Daniel from his native Tennessee to Western North Carolina where, in Asheville, he was stationed at the Confederate government's secret saltpeter works. During the war Sarah Ann bribed a

Union soldier to take the rest of the family across Union lines to join him.¹ They were successful in this venture, and after the war the mountains of North Carolina were to remain their home.

Daniel spent long hours of work teaching during the school months, as well as running his store, often traveling great distances to buy supplies for it. In the meantime he continued his studies for the ministry. Finally, in June, 1866 Daniel was ordained to the ministry at Locust Old Field Baptist Church (now Canton First Baptist of Canton, N.C.). Following his ordination he worked for 10 years for the American Missionary Society (the Sunday School Union), during which time he established many churches and Sunday Schools throughout the mountains of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

His law studies had made him an authority in parliamentary practice and he was chosen president of the Western Baptist Convention for several consecutive terms. As writing was another of his many talents, he became editor of the publication of this convention, The Blue Ridge Baptist, published in Hendersonville, N.C., a position he held for many years. Later, upon his move to Asheville, he was to edit the WNC Baptist, or Asheville Baptist. It was not until November of 1875 that he entered the fulltime ministry when he was called as pastor of First Baptist Church of Hendersonville, N.C. where he served for six years, followed by several years as pastor of Brevard First Baptist.

¹A story about this incident was written by a granddaughter and has been adapted into a play, The Mountain Movers, Connie Mixson, 1989.

Both his family experience and ministerial background prepared him well to lead the new congregation at Biltmore - Fern Hill Baptist - when he answered the call of the church in March, 1889. The minutes of the 8th annual session of the Buncombe County Baptist Ass'n of 8/27/89 list Fern Hill as a newly constituted church (constituted in April, 1889) with 25 members, and Pastor D.B. Nelson as pastor with a yearly salary of \$350. A historical sketch of the church printed in 1927 lists as charter members: Mr. and Mrs. Tom Reed, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Whittaker, Julia Nelson, J.D. Nelson, Mr. and Mrs. John Neely, Mr. and Mrs. D.B. Nelson, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Brown, P.P. Spain, and Mr. and Mrs. Gossett.

During the period of his pastorate at Fern Hill, Rev. Nelson was active in other areas of interest. As mentioned previously, he had become editor of the Asheville Baptist as soon as he moved to Asheville. A zealous Mason, he helped organize Biltmore Lodge, A.F. and A.M. in March of 1891 and was appointed Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of N.C. in January of the following year.

Rev. Nelson resigned from Fern Hill church in June, 1892 but, according to records in his Bible, returned on November 19, 1893 to preach the dedicatory sermon in the new house of worship built for the church by George Vanderbilt. Daniel was an ardent prohibitionist, and it was after his resignation from the church and still in the year 1892 that he ran as candidate for State Auditor on the Prohibition ticket.

In May of 1895 Rev. Nelson was called to Fletcher First Baptist as pastor. He and Sarah had purchased a farm near Horse Shoe in Henderson County, N.C. on the banks of the French Broad River on what is now Rugby Road many years before this in 1869. After his pastorate at Fern Hill he had returned to his farm, which he named "Mt. Carmel", and it was here that

he died in August of 1895 at the age of 64. Minutes of the Carolina Baptist Association of 1899, in a memorial to Daniel Buryman Nelson, point out his interest in education and the fact that he helped organize Judson College of Hendersonville, N.C.² That record also states that he often took young men into his home and helped them go to school - especially if they were entering the ministry, and he was known as the "Father of Young Preachers." Perhaps the highest tribute that could be paid to any pastor, though, is reflected in these words from those same Minutes:

"As pastor, he served tirelessly; preaching, teaching, visiting, helping, comforting in sorrow - ever leading his people forward in God's service."

Over the course of the years and to the present day this church has been blessed with many pastors having those God-given attributes.

²Judson College: A Baptist college chartered in 1861 as Judson Female College, but which later became coeducational. It operated from 1882 - 1892 in a building 3 blocks west on U.S. 64 in Hendersonville.

CHAPTER 4

OFF TO A GOOD START EARLY PASTORS WITH A VISION

Very little information exists about specific events in the life of the church between the years 1892 and the first recorded minutes of November, 1906. State Baptist records in Winston-Salem give a list of pastors of Fern Hill Baptist Church during this time:

M. A. Jenkins	1892-1893
G. L. Finch	1894
A. E. Brown	1895
W. H. Gibson	1896
W. W. Jones	1897-1898
W. P. Southern	1899
J. M. Hamrick	1900
W. F. Staley	1902-1904
W. C. Cleveland	1905
E. A. Allison	1906-1908

It would almost seem, judging from the pastoral turnover rate, that Fern Hill was a proving ground for preachers! Still, the young church continued to thrive, despite the short tenure of its individual leadership. By 1897 its membership had more than doubled to 60 members and in 1906, when the written records begin, the membership stood at 100.

Despite brief terms of service, the church was blest with excellent leadership in those first years of its existence. They were men who had a fervor for missions and this zeal is evident in their biographies as recorded in the annals of the Association. Not only was this mission spirit notable in our first pastor, through his 10 years of mission work for the Sunday School Board, but those characteristics were also evident in the lives of those who immediately followed him in the ministry here.

Dr. Millard A. Jenkins

Dr. Millard A. Jenkins, the 2nd pastor called to lead this young congregation was widely known in both the north and south as one of the leading preachers of our denomination. His birthplace is given in church historical information as Biltmore, N.C. in November, 1872. He attended Judson College and may well have been one of those young preachers assisted and influenced by Dr. D. B. Nelson.

Dr. Jenkins was ordained at the French Broad Avenue Baptist Church in Asheville in September, 1892. This was the year he was called to Fern Hill Baptist.

Dr. Jenkins served several large churches after leaving Fern Hill until his call in 1915 to the First Baptist Church of Abilene, Texas, where he remained for 32 years. At the peak of his pastorate in Abilene, a town of 42,000, one-tenth of the population belonged to his church. Of special interest to Southern Baptists is that while at Abilene he led in initiating the All-Inclusive Program, later to be known as the Cooperative Program which has been such a great boon to the support of missionaries all over the world since its inception. We get a hint of this interest in mission giving as early as 1893 when he was pastor at Fern Hill. During that year according to Associational records this church gave more to home missions than any other church. During the course of Dr. Jenkins' life he also found time to write five books. Two of the titles are recorded - Archangel of Death, and Sunday School for the Times.

Rev. Gilbert L. Finch

Rev. Gilbert L. Finch was ordained in September of 1888 and promptly became a missionary in the Tar River Association of N.C. Fern Hill may

have been one of a number of churches he served as a group, as he was concerned that mountain people in all areas have access to pastoral care.

Dr. Albert E. Brown

Dr. Albert E. Brown was born at Mossy Creek (Jefferson City), Tennessee, and his mother was a descendent of the Newman family that founded Carson-Newman College in that city. Dr. Daniel B. Nelson graduated from this institution when it was still called Mossy Creek College.

While still in college Dr. Brown worked as somewhat of a roving evangelist, traveling with other classmates, sometimes walking as much as 5 miles, to teach in several Sunday Schools in the nearby countryside.

He taught mathematics for 8 years after college until the call to preach became so overpowering that he dropped that work immediately to enter the pastorate. Old Berea Church of Buncombe County ordained him in 1889, and he served there for four years. His biography ³ gives us a glimpse of the character, spiritual goals, and preaching ability of this unique man:

When his fourth year was drawing to a close he faced the fact that about everybody in the community had become a Christian, and so he told the church that he should seek another field where there was more work to do. He offered his resignation, but the church would not then, nor have they since, accepted his resignation.

Dr. Brown was pastor for one year at Fern Hill, followed by other pastorates, but his first love was always mission work. He served as president of the Mission Board of the WNC Baptist Convention for 9 years. Probably his most pronounced value to missions was organizer of a system

³ Baptist Biography Vol. III, Editor J.W. Graham, 1922

of mission schools in the southern mountain region. Over a period of 23 years, beginning in 1899, he established and developed these mission schools which more than 6000 mountain children attended each year. These schools would later give to the world preachers, teachers, college presidents, as well as Christian workers in almost every field of endeavor. The writer of his biography stated that for mountain boys and girls whose hopes seemed only dreams, this man of God unlocked more doors of opportunity than any other. We can perhaps get an inkling of the long-term effect of his work in the mountains he loved by reading just two stanzas of a longer poem honoring him written by a much later pastor of our church, W. H. Fitzgerald:

"Son of the mountains, fearless and strong,
Prophet of hope with a challenge for wrong,
Lifter of burdens, inspirer of youth,
Faithful to God and defender of truth;
Down through the years we have followed thy trail
Never to find thy brave spirit to fail.
.....

"Son of the mountains, thy footprints still shine
Plain on the sands to that City divine,
Others might work for the glint of the gold,
Thine were the treasures of heaven untold.
Deep in thy heart was the shepherd's desire,
Love for thy Master and souls for thy hire."

CHAPTER 5

EVANGELIST PASTORS

Perhaps the major reason Biltmore has flourished so well over the years is that the church has been blessed with a large number of pastors who have shown through their involvement with missions or in other ways their concern for the lost. Beginning with our first pastor and continuing down through the years, this mission zeal is brought to the forefront time and time again through a careful study of the church history. Evangelistic efforts on the part of the first four pastors of our church have already been noted. Below are highlights in the lives of some who followed in their footsteps showing the continuation of this trend.

Rev. J. M. Hamrick

Rev. Hamrick spent most of his boyhood in Henderson County, N.C. and at the age of 19 received a teacher's certificate. He taught in the Buncombe County schools for 11 years during which time he attended Judson College in Hendersonville, a college many of our pastors were associated with. He went on to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, Kentucky. It is in an early report to the Association from the "Sweden Creek Mission" of Fern Hill Baptist Church dated 1901 that we read that this mission built a house of worship without having to ask aid. Rev. Hamrick preached at the mission the 3rd Sunday afternoon of each month, and was probably associated with the organization of this mission effort on the part of the church.

Rev. W.W. Marr

Rev. Marr served as an evangelist with the Buncombe Association immediately following his pastorate at Biltmore. As were several other pastors of our church, he was interested in writing and wrote and published a tract entitled The Missing Link. A special notation was made in his obituary that he was known for his evangelistic messages.

Rev. W. H. Moore

Biltmore Baptist was the first pastorate in North Carolina for Rev. Moore. His first sermon was preached in the new church on Summit Street Vanderbilt built for the congregation in May of 1913. Prior to his move here he had been a city missionary in Memphis under the Home Mission Board. It was under the preaching of Pastor Moore that Granny Warren was won to Christ.⁴ During the year he served as Pastor church membership increased by 90.

⁴ For the story of Granny Warren See Chapter 6.

S.T. Hensley

Again there is evidence of journalistic interest in a Biltmore pastor in Rev. S.T. Hensley. He served as editor of the Baptist Messenger and editor and publisher of the Baptist Herald. Pastor Hensley's interest in missions led him to a position of evangelist with the State Mission Board.

Dr. William Fitzgerald

Like our first pastor Dr. Fitzgerald was a Master Mason and was also a writer. He wrote and published many poems and sermons during his lifetime. Excerpts of one of his poems focusing on the life of A.E. Brown can be seen in an earlier chapter. Dr. Fitzgerald and his wife had 7 children, including two sets of twins. Perhaps this is what prompted his great interest in young people and youth ministry. One of his own children, a daughter, Ruth Lois Fitzgerald, was to become a missionary in Indonesia. Immediately after leaving Biltmore the Fitzgeralds served nearly 13 years as missionaries to the Eastern band of the Cherokee Indians in Cherokee.

Pastor Fitzgerald served our church a number of years, even returning after resigning at one time. Despite the fact that he served during the depression years and an extended period of hardship for the church when he often sacrificed much of his salary for needed expenses, the church continued to increase in membership at a steady rate.

Rev. W.P. Hall

Very little information is in any records concerning Pastor Hall. However, it was under his preaching that the church had a revival recorded as one of the best in the history of the church. 35 joined during this revival. During a relatively brief pastorate (1937-1940), the church membership increased by approximately 220.

During his pastorate at Biltmore he led the congregation in remodeling the church and building Sunday School rooms. \$10,000 was borrowed from the Home Mission Board Loan Department to assist in this move for growth.

Rev. C.F. Rogers

Rev. Rogers immediately followed Rev. W. P. Hall in the pastorate and not only continued his leadership role in the church remodeling and Sunday School project, but launched an effort to pay off the remaining debt on this project as soon as possible. This effort was a great success and the church had a mortgage burning and re-dedication of the building 4 years earlier than expected, in July of 1945. Pastors Hall and Fitzgerald both returned to preach at this service and the only living charter member, Julia Brown, touched the match to the paper.

Rev. H.B. Fisher

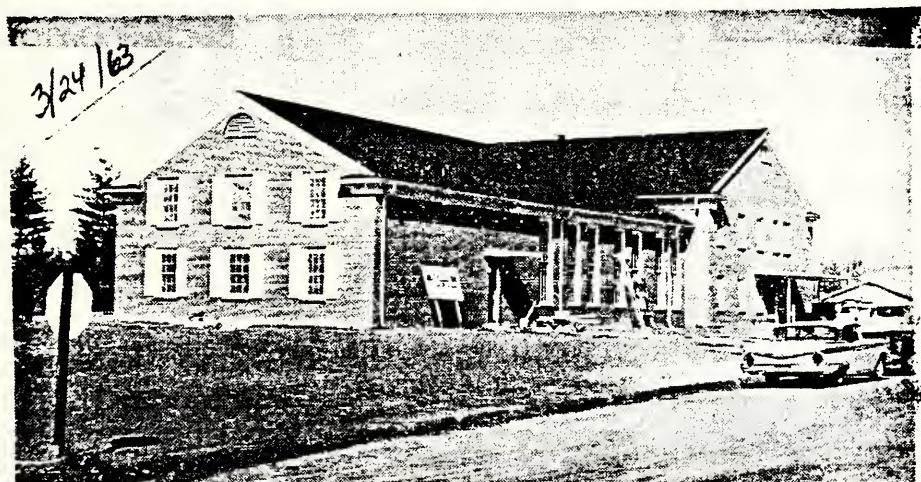
Although there is not much in written history concerning Rev. Fisher, longtime members remember him as another pastor concerned with youth and concerned that the church have facilities to bring people in. His preaching was evangelistic in nature and before he resigned nearly 200 more had joined the church.

Rev. John Grant

Rev. Grant was a pastor with a vision. It was under his leadership that the church was to purchase the property on which it now stands. The move was necessary to accommodate the steady increase in membership under his leadership. In addition to his pastoral ministry and assistance with the new building program of the church, Rev. Grant served for two terms as moderator of the Buncombe Baptist Association and was influential in helping the Association build its own quarters on Sulphur Springs Road in Asheville.

Rev. Harold Savelle

1989 marks the 20th year Pastor Savelle has been shepherd of the Biltmore Baptist flock. No-one who has visited this church during his pastorate would deny his zeal for winning souls to the Lord. His "mission field" for 20 years has been the city of Asheville, and the church has had a great increase in growth during his pastorate.



READY FOR WORSHIP—The congregation of the Biltmore Baptist Church will move into the new building at 1040 Hendersonville Rd. for the first service tomorrow at 11 a. m. The Rev. John A. Grant, pastor of the church since 1958, will preach at both the morning and evening services. The building is the first of three educational units to be built on the five-acre tract. Long range plans call for a main sanctuary and two additional educational units; a pavilion for outdoor events;

an open air worship area and a play ground. The new building contains a chapel with colonial furnishings with a capacity for 530 persons; Sunday School space for 600, with offices, fellowship hall and kitchens; four nurseries with their own kitchen and toilet facilities. The total cost of the building, land and furnishings is approximately \$210,000. The building committee was composed of O. F. Lytle, Robert G. Young, Willard Howell and Kermit Souther.

CHAPTER 6

"GRANNY" WARREN

No history of Biltmore Baptist Church would be complete without a section on Mrs. S.T. (Bertha) Warren, lovingly called "Granny" by all who knew her, no matter what the age. Granny Warren was a strong spiritual influence in this church from the time she was won to Christ by Pastor W.H. Moore and baptised here in 1913. She had first begun attending Biltmore Baptist in 1906 when it was meeting in the first church George Vanderbilt built for the congregation. That was the year she had married S. T. Warren and moved to Asheville.

As soon as she joined the church, Granny was given a Sunday School class to teach. Shortly after she was to organize a Sunbeams group, RAs and GAs, and after that she just never stopped and never seemed to tire of the children. They were special to her because in her own words they were "the church of tomorrow," and she certainly did her best to help grow that church in the knowledge and love of the Lord.

Despite the fact that the Warrens had no children, they were not childless. As far as Granny was concerned they had children all over the world, for their yard at #2 Warren Avenue became a playground from the time the couple moved in. Not many years after joining the church she began having annual Easter egg hunts in her yard for the church and neighborhood children which continued for the remainder of her life. But these were never just Easter egg hunts. They were another way she could tell her children about Jesus, for that is exactly what she would do before the hunt began. While the adults would hide the eggs Granny would draw the children around her and tell a brief story of Jesus' life, beginning with the Christmas story and ending with the resurrection on Easter

morning. After the story the children would sing and have homemade goodies, many of which she made herself. In fact, this was really a party, for each child would have his own place marked with a rabbit-shaped place card she had made. This would invariably have a Bible verse inscribed on it. After the refreshments the children would run into the yard to hunt the eggs. Even in her 90's Granny was still hosting her egg hunts for the children. Frequently there were 30 to 40 children present as well as a few adult helpers. She only stopped when it became necessary to move from her home to Aston Park Health Care Center, after which time the church continued to give the annual Easter egg hunt in her memory.

The church held a 100th birthday party for Granny on June 17, 1984 at the Health Care Center. At the party she made the remark: "I never expected to live to be 100. I am just longing for my promotion. I'm not going to die, I just want to be promoted." Granny Warren was promoted on August 6, 1984. She was 100 years old.



CHAPTER 7

THE WRITTEN RECORD MEMORABLE MOMENTS IN THE MINUTES- 1907 THROUGH 1957

That is no history that prints only the good and ignores the bad. Even God included the sins of His chosen people in His word. A history is meant not only to inform, but to teach, and the best way we learn is from our mistakes. Therefore I have not tried to gloss over some of the incidents mentioned in the following Minutes. The scripture does not gloss over the sins of David, yet through repentance he became the greatest king Israel ever had. God in His grace and love has allowed this church to flourish and be a strong witness to this community, despite lapses into our old nature that are sometimes evident in these brief narratives from the Minute books. Praise God, He still dwells in the midst of those who come together to worship and honor Him.

Church minutes for Fern Hill Baptist Church are first recorded in November, 1906, when A. E. Allison is the pastor. If minutes were taken earlier they have been lost over the years. There are many items that serve to pique the interest of the reader in these early records. Frequently that is all they do, for detailed background information is noticeably lacking in most cases. Months and sometimes years are skipped between entries. Suddenly a new pastor appears without warning (or leaves in the same manner). Oftentimes property is mentioned that is never alluded to again. In the period before the widespread use of typewriters the frequently male handwriting of the church clerk is often illegible. The spelling also can be quite creative. However, it is these records that give us a glimpse of the everyday life of the church. Come walk

for awhile into yesterday and look at the church through the eyes of these clerks.

FIRSTS

October 13, 1907: The minutes on this date refer to the church as Biltmore Baptist for the first time, with no comment or fanfare about the name change.

June 27, 1909: Voted to elect a financial secretary for the church and raise to \$600/year as a fulltime pastor's salary.

July 2, 1913: This was the date the vote was actually taken to officially change the name from Fern Hill to Biltmore Baptist. Vote was unanimous.

July 6, 1924: Moved that should a member of the board of deacons be absent for 3 consecutive meetings without a reasonable excuse he automatically be dropped from the board.

February 6, 1927: Recommended approval for a "closet tank" at the parsonage.

October 5, 1927: Each deacon will be given 10 families to look after and enlist them in some kind of service. (Church still needed \$10 more to pay past due bills - try to raise it Sunday).

January 6, 1932: Committee of 2 appointed to investigate all calls reported to them concerning brother members or others who should receive aid. Church passed a motion that a collection be taken every 1st Sunday after Communion for an emergency relief fund to be held in the church treasury.

August 5, 1953: Card was read regarding the Billy Graham meeting to be led here in November.

July 6, 1955: Recommended the church purchase property at 91 Shady Oak Drive to be used as a pastoriuum and use the old parsonage for Sunday School rooms.

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

February, 1914: Apparently something occurred regarding a deacon, his wife, and the pastor that required the deacon to send a certified letter to the church that he was not jealous of the pastor! The church voted to accept the letter. (The next date in the minutes is June 7, 1915 and there is a new pastor. The following minutes are dated February 4, 1916 with yet another pastor, C. M. Rock).

Dark Times in the Minutes - June, 1916 to June, 1917: Records during this time period are full of church discipline and dismissals of members who do not attend. Two were excluded from the church charged with disloyalty. They had been working as Sunday School teachers in West Chapel Methodist Church. Many notations about members who should be cited to come before the church the

following week and "show cause why they should not be disciplined for not attending church service and giving the church their financial and moral support."

February 2, 1920: It was decided to have no more services until the flu epidemic shows improvement. The brothers present pledged to make every effort possible to get the collection so the church could pay its expenses while closed. (There is a notation it reopened on February 22nd).

Years of Trial: October, 1927 through September 16, 1931: The minutes throughout this time period are full of discussions regarding budget deficits created by the purchase of the new church lot.⁵ Canvasses were taken, pledges made, yet several times the comment is made that "several bills are due and there is no money to pay them." Statement cards were even made up at one point to send to members. Pastor Fitzgerald spent his own money for various items for the church which they could not repay.

In April of 1929 a motion was made to ask Brother Hamrick to take the new church lot back and give them back their notes. One can't help but shudder at the comment that we "do away" with the janitor, allowing him time to get another house.

On September 8, 1929 Dr. Fitzgerald offered his resignation to take effect at once. His resignation was accepted the following month, followed by resolutions on his good and faithful work. On December 15 of the same year the church voted to again call him as pastor. He accepted the call December 22nd.

July, 1931: Finally the motion is made that the church deed back the property on Hendersonville Rd. to Mr. Hamrick and his heirs. This is officially done on September 16, 1931. The financial situation of the church is not to improve for approximately another 3 1/2 years judging from the Minutes during the time period.

July 12, 1942: A chaotic business meeting. The pastor at that time did not allow a member's name on the ballot for the Home or Extension Dept. who had held the office several years. He also suggested 7 deacons be eliminated from a list of 13. This was strongly objected to by a member and while the voting was in progress the pastor left, gathering up what votes he could and not appointing tellers to take charge of the votes. The following month it was moved the pulpit be vacated immediately. It was a close vote, but the motion carried.

TIMES OF TRIUMPH

July, 1913 through October, 1913: Church Minutes are filled with the names of many who came forward for baptism.

1906 to 1924: A "75 Million Campaign" is alluded to throughout all the Minutes beginning from the year they were first recorded. Whatever this campaign

⁵The Hamrick property on lower Hendeersonville Rd. This is the property that was later lost. See Chapter 8 for additional information.

referred to, our church stood 2nd in the Association for it on August 6, 1924. Several home canvasses as well as revivals are mentioned for this year as well.

Week of October 9, 1938: A revival began October 9 and ran 2 weeks with Pastor Hall preaching. It was said to have been one of the best in the history of the church. This success was due largely to the personal work done by the members. 35 joined the church, the greater part for baptism!

July 29, 1945: The burning of the mortgage on a \$10,000 debt to remodel the church is celebrated. Paid off much earlier than expected through a special drive for this purpose spearheaded by the pastor.

THAT OLD HUMAN NATURE

December 1, 1907: Withdrew fellowship from 2 members on charges preferred earlier of drunkenness.

March, 1909: Two members are dropped from the church roll on the charge of long and unexplained absence.

August 1, 1922: The deacons recommended the church withdraw fellowship from one of the members for conduct unbecoming a Christian.

April 7, 1931: The Deacon Board recommends instead of paying Dr. Fitzgerald a stated salary that he be paid "just what comes in." (Written across this statement in different penmanship is the word "incorrect", and the initials W.H.F.) Less than a week later a called conference is held where one of the brothers moved "that unless the attendance and contributions get better within the next 30 days, we quit." Fortunately, after a very hearty discussion, the motion was unanimously voted down.

November 9, 1955: A touch of prejudice is evident here. It is moved that should a person of the "colored race" present self for membership he would be required to come before the Spiritual Committee (composed of pastor and deacons) for an investigation. If accepted by the committee, a vote then would be made by the church. One member moved that if a member of any race other than white present himself for membership and is recommended by the Spiritual Committee that the vote by the congregation must be unanimous. This carried.

MINISTERIAL MOMENTS

January 7, 1910: Rev. Clarke resigned "through where his salary was paid and asked for a vacation until his resignation took effect."

December 28, 1919: Pastor stated "something must be done to have the church warm and comfortable." The matter was left to a deacon to tell the janitor what must be done and it was recommended that the Sunday School pay \$2/week if necessary.

June 4, 1923: The church extended a unanimous call to Dr. W. H. Fitzgerald as pastor at \$2400/year. He accepted effective July 8, 1923.

September 9, 1923: Moved to ask the Ladies Missionary Society to change the pastor's name in front of the church. (He's been there 2 months already!)

February 3, 1924: Church here is referred to as the South Biltmore Baptist Church. It was left to Pastor Fitzgerald to write and get prices of songbooks. He was also instructed to order a ton of coal and a load of kindling wood.

April 19, 1931: As the church was having financial difficulty, it accepted a proposal by Pastor Fitzgerald that he take a \$15 per week cut in salary temporarily. This does not seem much of a sacrifice until we note that his salary was \$40/week!

September 10, 1933: Dr. Fitzgerald stated he would cut his salary to \$20/week. It was moved by 2 deacons to request the pastor to resign. This was rejected by the church. The 2 deacons then resigned and this was accepted. One of them also resigned as church treasurer.

September 3, 1934: It is moved Brother Siler ask Dr. Fitzgerald the amount due on his back salary. (\$230.57 was found to be the amount). It was recommended the church borrow this to pay Dr. Fitzgerald.

January, 1940: Pastor Hall asked to have his vacation begin in May to take special work at the seminary for 4-5 weeks. He promised to be a new pastor on his return. "He might go so far as to buy himself a wig while away. But as he's so much younger than his wife now, he doesn't think the church will approve."

April 4, 1956: Moved and carried that Gayle Brown be licensed as a minister.

May, 1957: Rev. Fisher's resignation was accepted. In January, 1958 Rev. John Grant was called as pastor.

LOOKING TO FUTURE GROWTH

October 6, 1925: A new location of the church is discussed, but no decision is made.

January 10, 1926: Pastor Fitzgerald and a committee of 7 are appointed to purchase a building lot for a new church.

October 31, 1926: The Property Committee recommends the church purchase the Hamrick property at a price of \$40,000. This was accepted.

November 27, 1938: The church voted to begin excavating a new building on the Davis property - land they had purchased beside the church. They applied to the Home Mission Board for a loan of \$3500 to help finance this project. Later it was voted that instead of a new building, the church should be

remodeled and Sunday School rooms built. This plan was carried through, and the loan from the Home Mission Board was paid off early (see under Triumphs above).

PUTTING IT IN WRITING - THE CHURCH CLERK

June 6, 1909: Rev. F. A. Clark preached his 1st sermon. (Apparently the church clerk was unsure of the text, for a blank space was left for this).

May, 1919: One is bemused by what lies behind this comment beside a name under the "How and When Dismissed" section of the record book: "Says he's no member and never was."

March 19, 1924: Miss Myrtle Bell Thomas' church letter was discussed and it was brought out that her letter had already been granted twice and it was suggested the church clerk write Miss Thomas and suggest she go to some Baptist church and get under the watch-care of such church and have the clerk of that church write for her letter. "Miss Myrtle B. Thomas was last heard of in Atlanta, Ga."

September 1, 1929: The Missionary Society asked the church to give the Biltmore H.S. and college teachers a reception. It was voted to take a "senses" of the community. On another matter apparently a Notary Public's services would be required. This can only be assumed, of course. According to the Church Clerk the committee would see about a "Noter Republic."

December 4, 1932: Was it with tongue in cheek over the play on words that the clerk made the notation that "little Helen Lytle sang Little Feet be Careful."

SUPPORT OF OTHER CHURCHES

July 12, 1932: Moved to grant the Methodist church permission to use the baptistry Sunday afternoon July 17th.

June 5, 1933: The deacons recommended that no cottage prayer meetings be held for 2 weeks in order to attend revival services at the Methodist church.

MEMORIES

November, 1907: Financial Statement shows receipts - \$18.79, disbursements - \$14.50, balance on hand - \$4.29.

March 4, 1931: The church put itself on record as opposed to the horse and dog race track that is trying to locate near Asheville.

January, 1942: Mrs. S.T. Warren is mentioned as leader of the Sunbeams. (For additional information on Granny see the preceding chapter).

May 5, 1943: It is mentioned that the Sunbeams had an Easter egg hunt with Mrs. Warren.

CHAPTER 8

CHANGING LOCATIONS - AN EVER-GROWING CHURCH

Our church has been involved in the moving and preparation to move process a number of times over the years. It moved from its first location to one nearby (probably in the area of where the Biltmore Dairy Bar now stands) in 1893 and moved again in 1913 to property at 225 Summit Street. These moves were financed by Mr. George Vanderbilt.

In October, 1926 property was purchased and plans laid to build a new church on lower Hendersonville Road where the Biltmore United Methodist Church now stands. However, due to financial straits caused by the depression years, that property was deeded back to the owner.

A vote was again taken in 1938 to build a new church, but this was rescinded in favor of an educational building instead. The Minutes mention a vote to begin excavation and application to the Home Mission Board for a loan. With this loan the building was remodeled and Sunday School rooms were built.

Rev. John Grant was called as pastor of the church in January of 1958 and by May of that year it was evident that greater accommodation space was needed for the steadily growing membership. Therefore, when the Davis property adjacent to the church on Summit Street became available it was purchased with the objective of using this property for that much needed space.

However, in February of 1960 a much more promising piece of land in terms of growth potential became available further up on Hendersonville Road - the land on which our church now stands. It was the vision of Rev. Grant that aided the membership to see the potential of this 5-acre tract of land and to

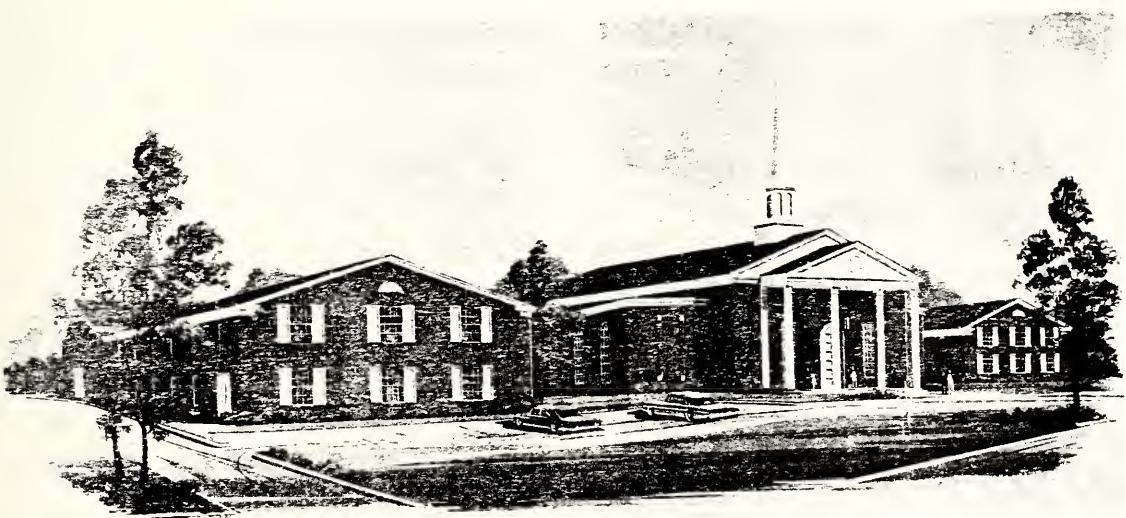
vote for its purchase. This property at what was then 1040 Hendersonville Road⁶ was purchased by the church and over a period of years the other church property was sold. Ground was broken in July, 1961 for the 1st of what were to be 3 buildings. In order to help finance the construction of the first unit, a \$50,000 bond drive was begun in March of 1962. Just one year later, in March, 1963 the congregation moved in to this first building, which continued to serve the increasing membership until Rev. Grant was called to a new pastorate in 1968.

In 1969 Rev. Harold Savell came with his family to pastor the growing congregation. By 1975 it was obvious that in order to reach out in a meaningful way to both its members and the community as a whole a Family Life Center would be a worthwhile effort. It was felt this would give not only a socialization and educational opportunity but a witnessing opportunity as well through its outreach into the community. In order to create the needed funds for this effort a \$400,000 bond issue was sold in record time. In less than a year, on September 26, 1976 the building was dedicated. The Family Life Center contains 30,000 square feet of floor space and is divided into two units - an educational unit for children from birth through sixth grade and a full-size gymnasium. The gymnasium is equipped for church meetings, fellowships, banquets, basketball, volleyball, skating, shuffleboard, drama, music, arts and crafts. It also houses the church's week-day child care ministry.

Plans for the future include the building of a new sanctuary to complete the original 3-building plan. Already the continually growing church body

⁶Since that time postal numbering has changed, making the current address of the church 980 Hendersonville Road.

frequently fills the present building to capacity as God continues to work in our midst. The little church at Asheville Junction that started out with 25 members has certainly come a long way.



CHAPTER 9

THE LAST 20 YEARS

The membership felt a sense of personal loss when Rev. John Grant, the visionary pastor they had grown to love over the 11 years of his pastorate, resigned to accept a call to Southside Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C.

In his resignation letter of November 6, 1968 Rev. Grant made the following statement:

"Our prayers will be for you through the months as you seek for a pastor. God has a man somewhere that can come in and lead you to new heights if you will let God have His way."

Rev. Grant couldn't know where that "somewhere" would be - but God did, and He made it clear to the Pulpit Committee when they visited North Newton Baptist Church in Newton, N.C. that here was the man Rev. Grant was referring to. Rev. Harold Savell and his wife, Willie Ruth, are transplanted Mississippians, having both grown up in the Mississippi Delta. He received his B.D. degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., and when the Biltmore Pulpit Committee went to visit his church in Newton he had been pastoring there for six years. Prior to that time he had served churches in Sanford, N.C. and his home state of Mississippi.

Rev. Savell was invited to preach to the Biltmore congregation on April 27, 1969, and following the morning worship that day the decision was unanimous to call him as pastor. Ever since he and Willie Ruth and their four children first arrived in June, 1969 it has been evident that here was another man of vision. His evangelistic preaching and witnessing in the community have kept the church busily baptising and welcoming new members for 20 years. Upon his arrival in

1969 Rev. Savell preached to a membership of 656. The latest membership rolls in August of 1989 when this history was completed stand at well over 1200 and the church has an operating budget of \$352,000.

Over the last 20 years we have been blessed with excellent leadership to assist Pastor Savell in working with the youth, choirs, and in educational ministries. Some of these men who assisted greatly in helping the church in its mission to all the membership and have since left for other ministries were Blaine Tucker, appointed Assoc. Pastor, 1971, Ken Byerly, appointed as Minister of Music in 1973, Steve Austin, called in 1976 as Minister of Music and Education, and Mike Joyner, who arrived in 1979 as Minister of Education and Activities. Many others of our own membership as well as young people from Mars Hill have worked with the youth and our choirs during times when we were without professional assistance in these areas.

In 1985 Roger Ward was called to be Minister of Music and Youth. His wife, Susan, is an accomplished pianist and their experience as well as their youthful and excited outlook on telling the gospel message through music has stimulated not only the youth but the adult choirs as well. Roger led the church in a project to purchase a set of handbells without putting the church in debt. (Members were encouraged to "buy a bell"), and has since that time organized both youth and adult handbell choirs. He also led in the recent purchase of much-needed choir robes. The Wards have two children.

The church has been blessed during the last year in its educational and training ministries through the excellent leadership and teaching abilities of our new Associate Pastor, Garland Vance. Garland and his wife, Katherine and their two children joined us in July, 1988. Garland brought with him the

ability to make learning exciting and challenging. A training union that had begun to show depletion in the attendance rolls is now frequently bursting at the seams to the point where larger rooms must be sought for meetings. Garland continues to challenge Sunday School teachers and members alike to reach out in new and creative ways to bring others under the power of the Gospel message.

Biltmore Baptist has had its share of good experiences and bad over the course of these 20 years. The church is in every sense a family, and every family has its share of laughter and tears, heartaches and joys, discouragement and triumph. Most importantly, God has continued to bless us over the years with His presence, and even in the hard times, His presence is all-sufficient.

With His presence we have weathered the storms that beset every congregation at one time or another. The Day Care Center has had its share of trials. A few members chose to leave the church over one major disagreement involving its administration. Yet God continues to use this ministry in the church's outreach to the community. Scripture has told us, "a little child shall lead them." Our Day Care children are hearing the message of a Savior's love and taking it home to their families - some of which have no other Christian witness.

We have known the power of His presence even in our sorrow when dear ones were taken from our midst, such as Stan Ownbey, a young man who let Christ shine through his life and who is remembered in a yearly scholarship at T.C. Roberson H.S. as well as in our prayer room. We remember Ray Eaton, another young man who so beautifully served his Lord by working faithfully and tirelessly in the bus ministry. We remember the Sextons - Dot and Charlie and their daughter, Sheila Morelock. In memory of Dot's years of service as Day

Care Director the church voted to sponsor an Irene Wortham Center child. These and so many other names over the years, such as Margaret Whiteside, Granny Warren and others whose lives have been a living testimony to the God they served help us to more earnestly strive to honor God in our own lives.

We have known the beauty of His presence in our joys - in our children who have married and carried their Christian witness into other communities, or continued to strengthen ours; in the births of new little ones to bring up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

We have known the glory of His presence in the calling of several from our congregation to serve Him in church related ministries. Gayle Brown is the Director of Missions for the Buncombe Baptist Association. Ronald Brown is serving as pastor of a church in the Buncombe Association. Joe David Fore is serving as a Baptist Student Union Director on a college campus. Greg Whiteside is serving as Director of Young Life (a Christian student movement on high school campuses) in Hickory. Alan Taylor is serving as Youth Director in a church in Durham and continuing his education toward the ministry of the Chaplaincy. All of these have had the church's blessing as they have sought the Lord's will for their lives in Christian service.

The licensing of these young men is not the only evidence of how seriously the church has taken Christ's command to go and preach the gospel. Beginning in "Jerusalem" the church has over the years worked in other ways to reach people. At one time we had an extensive bus ministry, various times neighborhood canvasses have been carried out, revivals are frequent, and special training union projects to train witnesses are ongoing. The church is a regular contributor to the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist

Convention. In 1983 the church voted to work with other churches in helping stock the food closet of Asheville-Buncombe Community Christian Ministry (ABCCM), and we have members still actively involved in this special ministry. Some members became actively involved in a prison ministry and the church regularly collects new toys at Christmas for the prisoners to give their children. In 1986 the church began providing tapes of the morning worship services to be available for those unable to attend. A ministry to the disabled was begun in 1987 with a committee formed to study ways to make the church more accessible to the handicapped. Just recently the membership voted to contribute regularly to the new Buncombe Baptist Resource Center, an operation of the Association that will make resource material and equipment as well as meeting facilities available to local Baptist churches as another opportunity to reach out in new and creative ways. The Day Care Center and Family Life Center are other mission opportunities, and during the past year the church has begun a mission Sunday School at Pine Valley, a local trailer park.

But this outreach went beyond our immediate community. It has also reached out to the world community. In 1970 one of the adult Sunday School classes raised \$150 for a native missionary in India. To this the church added \$650 to subsidize 2 students for 1 year at a mission school there. Regularly through the years other mission projects were featured. Some of our own members have spent time directly working with missionaries in the field. Most recently, in February of 1989 the church supported one of our members on a mission trip to Mexico. Some time ago the membership made a commitment to help support Covenant Fellowship Baptist, a church in Michigan begun by the Home Mission Board which has been having financial difficulties. A new venture

for the church was our invitation to the Korean Baptist Church of Asheville to use our facilities for services, functions and meetings until they are able to acquire their own property, and the membership also voted to participate in the World Missions Conference in October of 1990.

Through the pastor's leadership the church has become an example of the type of race relations that can develop in Christian love. As early as 1972 Biltmore's congregation joined a local black congregation, Rock Hill Baptist, for Race Relations Sunday. The churches now interchange pastors and choirs and the congregations exchange meeting places for evening services frequently during the year.

Where will the next 20 years lead? We don't know what is out there that we may be called on to face tomorrow or next week or next year. But although we do not know what the future holds, we can face the unknown with confidence because we know the One who holds the future, and He has promised in His word never to leave us nor forsake us.

This has been the history of a church that has served its Lord in the South Asheville area for 100 years. Ed Seabough is a resident of the South Asheville community who has written a large number of contemporary Christian songs. He wrote the song that follows in 1969, and I think it speaks eloquently to the task of the church in our age. More importantly, it transcends any specific time period, for God calls across the centuries for those who love him to show that love by turning their lives over to His control, and then to reflect that love in ministry to the world. I feel its message should be the goal of every church member.

Here Is My Life

...Ed Seabough

Lord, you placed me in this world of time and space and missiles hurled,
With eyes I've seen the ghetto gloom, with ears I've heard the sonic boom,
And man cry out for breathing room, I cannot wait---I cannot wait!
Here is my life; I want to live it, Here is my life; I want to give it
Serving my fellow man---doing the will of God,
Here is my life, here is my life, here is my life.

Lord, you asked for all my life in healing hurts and ending strife,
With mind to always seek the truth, with voice to always speak the truth,
And live to manifest Christ's worth, I cannot wait---I cannot wait!
Here is my life; I want to live it, Here is my life; I want to give it
Serving my fellow man---Doing the will of God,
Here is my life, here is my life, here is my life.

Lord, I give my life to you, my time my talents each day new,
With faith to witness to your plan, with hope to gladly take my stand,
And love to minister to man, I cannot wait---I cannot wait!
Here is my life; I want to live it, Here is my life; I want to give it
Serving my fellow man---Doing the will of God,
Here is my life, here is my life, here is my life.

A NOTE FROM THE PASTOR

Paul said, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have the same purpose--for we are God's fellow workers." This is certainly true of the Biltmore Baptist Church. There has been the faithful planting of the Good Seed, and there has been the faithful watering of the seed.

I count it a great honor to have been privileged to be one of the pastors of this great church. This sense of honor comes from the knowledge of Whose church this really is. This church did not begin as the result of a disagreement and a split from another Christian body. Rather, this church began as the result of a burden from God for the souls of people in the Biltmore area. It began as God's Church.

It is a great honor to be the pastor of this church because, as such, I join the ranks of some great men of God. Even when it was very small this church had some men to serve as its pastor that became widely known in Baptist circles and made great contributions to the Baptist program. A good example is our second pastor, Dr. Millard Jenkins, who gave birth to what is known today as "The Cooperative Program" in Baptist churches of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Not only has this church had a great past, I feel the Biltmore Baptist Church has an unlimited future. God, through the leadership of His servants has located his church in a strategic location. he is opening unusual doors of opportunity for ministry. The growth of the community is sometimes overwhelming. The spirit of the Church is soaring. God continues to make His presence known in the meetings of

the congregation. All of these facts make it exciting to be a part of Biltmore Baptist Church today.

As you launch into the second century of your existence as a vessel of God you will find the challenge even greater than our forebearers did. May God grant you the grace, wisdom and power that will exceed your need.

Affectionately,



Harold Savell

On behalf of the Centennial Committee, I want to say, "Thanks" to Connie Mixon, who did the compiling and writing of our Church History and Drama. We appreciate Connie taking time out of a busy schedule to do this excellent job for the Church and the Committee.

We also want to say a, "great big thanks" to Faye Alexander for directing the Drama, THE MOUNTAIN MOVERS.



SOME SPECIAL PEOPLE

MRS. GRACE ALDER



Mrs. Grace Alder joined Biltmore Baptist Church in 1920 giving her the honor of having been a member the greatest number of years.

MR. K. B. LISENBEE



50 YEAR DREAM — Kenneth B. Lisenbee, who has not missed Sunday school in 50 years, displays his string of perfect attendance pins. He will soon receive his 50th pin at Biltmore Baptist Church. (Staff Photo by Patty Wakrup)

Mr. K. B. Lisenbee had 50 years of perfect attendance in Sunday School before his death in March 17, 1988.

MINUTES

... OF THE ..

TENTH ANNUAL SESSION

... OF THE ..

BUNCOMBE COUNTY

Baptist Association,

OF NORTH CAROLINA,

.. HELD WITH THE ..

FERN HILL BAPTIST CHURCH,

AUGUST 14, 15 and 16,

— 1894 —

PROCEEDINGS.

BILTMORE, N. C., Aug. 14, 1894.—The Buncombe County Baptist Association of North Carolina met in its thirteenth annual session with the Fern Hill church at 11 a. m. The introductory sermon was preached by Rev. S. Jones Morgan. He took for his text 1st Corinthians 3:9. The sermon was one of good thought and delivered in a way that would impress all of his earnestness and zeal in the Master's cause. At the close of the sermon Rev. G. L. Finch offered prayer. Song—"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." Rev. A. E. Brown, Moderator, called the Association to order. Bro. J. M. Stoner, of Asheville, was elected to act as temporary Clerk. Bros. J. H. Tucker and G. L. Finch were requested to act as reading clerks. Letters from the following churches were read and the names of their delegates were enrolled:

Asheville First Church—Rev. J. L. White, pastor, J. W. Anderson, W. P. Southern, Jno. P. Morgan, W. P. Whittington, L. B. McBrayer, Geo. H. Burnham, M. M. Lemmond, J. A. Porter, J. N. Morgan, W. D. Justice, John R. Rich, J. H. Tucker, R. J. Stokely, Wm. Weaver, J. M. Stoner, J. D. Brevard, Virge Hildebrand.

Asheville West End Church—W. P. Southern, pastor, T. L. Pennell, J. H. Sexton, Rev. J. K. Connally.

FINANCIAL STATISTICS.

CHURCHES.	PASTORS.	Salary	Spent	Convention & Missions	Home Missions	Foreign Missions	Church Building and Repairs	Baptist Orphanage	Ministerial Education	Support of Poor	Church Property	All Other Objects.	Misericord Fund	Total Raised	
1st Church, Asheville	J. L. White	\$2000	720 28	158 37	307 05	760 91	69 33	50,000	70 85	84 46	5 00	\$4176 25			
Antioch	W. T. Bradley	60	5 15	8 43	4 x5				1400	8 25	4 52	1 00	78 43		
Beaverdam	A. E. Brown	253 50	15 40	19 85	4 50				1400				307 12		
Berea	W. M. Murry	150	1 25	10 60	6 55		41 70		1400				80	210 90	
Big Ivy	B. B. Riddle	50		2 50	2 50				800				2 00	57 00	
Bent Creek	James Plemons	32 60		4 50	2 50			5 00		2 00	1 40		48 00		
Brown's Chapel	J. C. Cordell	50	10 00				2 00						60	62 60	
Beulah	G. P. Austin	20								1 40	50			21 90	
Cane Creek	A. J. Justice	20		25 00	14 30	5 00	10 00	500 00		21 50		1 50	10 00	787 30	
Flat Creek	T. M. Honeycutt	100			2 25	2 50				1800		1 25		106 00	
French Broad	No pastor now	500		147 35	14 43				6000	5 00		2 00		668 78	
Fern Hill	G. L. Finch	600		126 50	13 40	8 15	12 50	20 50	48 20	15 00	14 00	1 50	40 00	899 75	
Gash's Creek	J. C. Owen	100			10 00	5 00	10 00					8 75		133 75	
Holominy	E. J. Morgan	180	2 00	5 00	-5 00	20 00	20 50	5 00				1 50		239 09	
Locust Grove	A. J. Sprinkle	45										80		45 84	
Mout Olive	No pastor					1 20								1 20	
Morgan Hill	S. J. Morgan	75										1 60		93 81	
Mout Carmel	A. E. Brown	200		16 55	7 68	5 00	8 64	325 00	1 35		5 00			50 22	
New Salem	James Plemons	50											30	50 34	
Oak Grove	L. J. Bailey	65										1 00		68 94	
Pleasant Hill	J. E. Bassett	50										65		53 54	
Sulphur Springs	M. Sluder	25		4 50								1 00		30 66	
Spring Mountain	S. F. Moore	15			1 70							50		29 85	
Trinity	M. Sluder											70			70
Vernon Hill	No pastor			2 00								1 00	25	13 25	
White Rock	L. Y. Israel	50			5 13	7 80								64 07	
West End, Asheville	W. P. Southern	276	200 00	62 56				90 00				50 00	1 00	679 54	
Avery's Creek	E. J. Morgan	25			4 86	4 00						1 00		34 86	
		65172 10	1077 98	341 06	64 69 395 n	1777 61 136 18				125 60 106 23	27 95	50 00		43 290	

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